

# **Leaner & Greener**



## **A Cascadian Guide to Reducing Waste and Cutting Costs**

**First Edition**

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# Introduction

A society works best when everyone contributes what they can. Some can contribute generously; some have only modest means.

This is a book for those of the most modest means. If you have little more than a home of some sort, these are things you can do to help reduce the impact of daily life on yourself, your family, and on the world around you.

I have lived on less than \$10,000 per year since moving out on my own a little over four years ago, and I have discovered that there are so many things you can do to help not only save money, but reduce your impact on society and the environment.

Not all of these tips will be of use to everyone, but there should be at least one thing in this book that everyone can implement in order to live a more conscionable life.

## **Tip 1: Don't Sweat what you Can't Do**

We have it beaten into our heads that “green living” is expensive, inaccessible, or something only done by upwardly mobile people who have a sudden change of conscience.

So many products and practices are marketed now under the “green banner,” and so many tips are offered that you may or may not be able to do.

And so my first tip to anyone and everyone who wants to live with less impact on the environment is simply this: don't panic.

Maybe you don't have \$3000 to convert your car to all-electric. Don't panic.

Maybe you live in an apartment and can't grow your own vegetables. Don't panic.

Maybe you can't afford foods that are healthier or grown in a more conscionable way. Again, I say, don't panic.

Remember that making the world a better place has to be a collective effort, with as many people doing as much as they can at any given time. Do what you can, but don't feel guilty for what you can't do.

There are still plenty of ways that even those of us living below the poverty line can contribute in our own way. Even if those ways seem “small” and “modest,” consider this: if everyone's on board, we can change the world in profound ways.

Consider this: by some estimates, roughly 50% of the world's grain supply goes toward raising beef cattle. So if everyone reduced their beef consumption by 50%, that's 25% of the world's grain supply (or the arable land to grow it) freed up right away. This is on the order of several million tons of good foodstuff or several million acres of land that won't have to be needlessly wasted, all because you decided to cut Salisbury Steak down from once a week to twice a month. You'll also free up a fair amount of money because beef is fairly expensive compared to other protein sources like beans.

Never underestimate what you can do. That's what this book is about: to help you empower yourself to make a difference, no matter how “modest” it may seem.

## **Tip 2: Don't Be Greenwashed**

In recent years, there has been a popular craze to promote products as “green” or “organic.”

Many of these products do use more conscionable methods of production or harvest than their commercial counterparts. Some offer more efficient means of doing things, and some offer more earth-friendly alternatives to the things people enjoy doing every day.

There's just one major problem with all of this: it does not address the root of the problem.

You can change the kinds of items being consumed, but if you do not address over-consumption, you will do nothing to solve problems like deforestation.

You can reduce fuel consumption with a hybrid car, but you can't change the fact that it needs oil and still puts out its share of pollution.

You can employ more conscionable labor practices and better wages for third-world farmers, but particularly when importing items you can never be completely sure that you're not creating worse circumstances somewhere else down the line.

You can use chemicals that aren't as harsh, but if you don't understand that a pollutant is nothing more or less than something that exists in over-abundance in the environment, you will be doomed to make the same mistakes over and over. Remember that even table salt, in high enough concentrations, can destroy entire ecosystems.

Then, of course, there are those who put out products- such as household detergents, foods, and other common items- that will either come up with elaborate reasons why their product is more “green,” or they will cash in on weasel words, “green” imagery, and token gestures to make their product more appealing.

For example, the phrase “all natural” comes up often. “all natural” is not the same as “organic,” nor is it any guarantee that a product is not in some way harmful to yourself or the environment; cyanide, after all, is also “all natural.”

Another example of the above is when a product makes no pretenses about being environmentally friendly, but the producers change the product's packaging or design to evoke the look of “green” products. I recall seeing some household cleaning agent a couple years ago (I can't recall the brand name) that had changed their label to a green color, changed their bottle to imitate the look of recycled plastic, and added images of leaves and trees to their logo to make it look like they had a “green” product. A quick glance at the package revealed no change in the product or its packaging, except for these aesthetic tweaks, but you can be certain that many people bought it because it looked earth-friendly.

Don't fall for greenwashing. Remember that there is no substitute for real change, and trying to cling to self-destructive ways by buying “greener” products to help them with is like trying to break a drug habit by switching from cocaine to heroin.

## **Tip 3: Reduce!**

Some of you- especially those who grew up in the 90s- may remember the three “R’s”: Recycle, Reduce, Re-Use.

While recycling and re-use seem to get a lot of attention (and will be covered here), I think the emphasis on reduction needs to be brought up, particularly when it comes to reducing consumption.

Reducing waste, after all, begins with reducing the amount of items we consume in the first place. If there's less garbage in, there's less garbage out.

And yet, to look at our society, so much of it is based on conspicuous consumption. We are buried alive every day by advertisements on TV, radio, the Internet, billboards, and magazines extolling the virtues of this product or that product.

But consider how many products are thrown away, replaced before they've reached the end of their service life, come in way too much packaging to begin with, or are made with materials that have to be gathered abroad from countries with questionable labor practices.

Reducing simply means this: If you don't need it, you can either go without it, use something you've already got, or buy it used.

Consider the millions of tons of waste that could be avoided if everyone lived by that simple advice. Do you really need that smart phone, or is it just to keep up with your friends? Do you really need a new car, or will the old one keep going a little while longer? Do you really need to have strawberries in winter, or can you wait until summer when the local season begins?

Waste is the greatest problem with a post-industrial consumer society, and reduction and re-use are so vitally important to transforming that society and its values that no serious discussion about conscionable living can be complete without it.

When you reduce consumption, the market has to find other ways to survive. It goes back to the basics, and we are forced to deal with the surpluses in both our production and our work force. It forces society to re-think how it treats its natural and human resources and forces us to make the most of everyone and everything around us.

Reducing waste isn't just good for the environment; it is a potential force for revolution. Never let greenwashers convince you that you can reconcile consumer culture with social change; be the change by not getting caught up in consumer culture.

## **Tip 4: Re-Use**

Across North America- and Cascadia is no exception- there is a wealth of perfectly useful items that are discarded without a second thought.

Some will end up in landfills; some will mitigate the damage and end up in recycling centers and thrift shops.

But all have one thing in common: they are a symptom of the needless surpluses our society generates.

Re-using starts at home. Suppose, for example, you have a food item that comes in a plastic container with a snapping lid, such as potato salad. You have another product that you want to buy, such as sliced cheese.

Now, you could do what most people do, that is, you could throw away the potato salad container, and buy a pack of individually-wrapped cheese slices. By doing so, you've needlessly wasted about 4 ounces of plastic. Now multiply that by about twenty million and you can get some idea of the kind of waste possible in Cascadia alone.

What my partner and I do is save the container from the egg salad, then re-use that to keep our sliced cheese fresh. The sliced cheese we buy is not individually-wrapped, but has only a single wrapper on its outside. These are the kinds of small, simple things you can do that will add up exponentially if others start doing them too.

When shopping, try to buy products with minimal packaging, or with something that can be re-used or recycled when you're done with it.

Re-using doesn't have to end with finding new uses for things you've already bought. Another important aspect of re-use is finding new life in old appliances.

My partner and I got most of our appliances- including a stereo, a TV/VCR combo, a cordless drill, numerous kitchen utensils, a microwave, a recliner, and a George Foreman Grill from thrift shops, trash piles, and people who simply didn't need them any more. All these items were in perfect working order.

Look around some time at the trash piles, dumpsters, thrift shops, and yard sales in your community. Why would you spend \$400 for a couch when you can buy one used for \$20? Why would you buy a new stereo when your neighbor has one out by the curb for free that works perfectly well? By re-using items, you not only help the world, but you can avoid the pitfalls of debt culture. You will save thousands of dollars and live just as well or better than your neighbors.

Retailers and producers rely on the illusion of scarcity to keep selling items nobody needs; by looking around you at the perfectly good items that are discarded on a regular basis, you can subvert the consumer culture and begin steering the culture toward one that treats every usable item as something of value to be stewarded.

Of course, much of these problems could be avoided altogether with my next tip.

## **Tip 5: If It Works, Keep Using It**

This is another tip that not only reduces your impact, but saves thousands of dollars over time. If you have an item that works perfectly well- such as an appliance or vehicle- why replace it?

We can come up with any number of excuses for replacing perfectly good items, but in the end they all amount to just that: excuses. Consider how many thousands of needless products are sold, how many natural resources are used up needlessly, and how many people stay in debt because they buy things they simply don't need.

For years I kept a 1995 Chevrolet Corsica alive. My friends all told me I should just spend the money on buying something new, but I still think it was better to keep that car running.

After all, in the time I had it I spent maybe \$4,500 in all keeping it on the road; this was over the course of 7 years. Over the same course of time I would have spent more than \$25,000 on even an "economy" car. I would have been legally obligated to make payments, as opposed to only paying for repairs when I had no other way to get to work or class, and I would have had to spend thousands more on insurance until I paid it off.

By keeping existing machines running, whether by fixing them yourself or having a friend fix them, you're avoiding one of the great pitfalls of consumer culture: debt bondage and artificial poverty. How often do you meet someone who makes \$30,000 per year, and complains that they have no money? When you look at their car payment, their house payment, their various credit card payments, and all these other things, it becomes clear that their lack of money is caused by an overreliance on creature comforts and a complacency to the consumer culture that has rendered their effective income less than someone making \$10,000 per year can claim just by living modestly.

Sometimes a new item is the only way to go. If you have a situation where only the highest-quality, brand new warrantied and guaranteed product will get the job done, then by all means buy it. But before you do, question the need for something new. Question it relentlessly, and if it doesn't stand the test of necessity, don't buy it.

Remember too that every item you keep using is one less item that has to be manufactured, sold, distributed, and take up space on a retailer's shelf. It's one less item to artificially inflate the economy with, one less illusion to clutter your life and the lives of those around you. Live simply, and don't buy new appliances unless you need them.

## **Tip 6: Don't Forget to Recycle!**

Of course, playing up the importance of reduction of waste and re-use of items shouldn't come at the cost of playing down the importance of recycling; quite to the contrary.

There is, however, a wealth of information online and in libraries everywhere about the various ways you can go about recycling, from simply putting things in their designated bins when you're done with them, to going as far as building an entire house from discarded items (it can be done).

Generally speaking, recycling metal uses fewer resources (and has less environmental impact) than tearing apart the earth looking for more. Recycling glass reduces the number of non-biodegradable glass bottles trapping small animals and cluttering landfills, and recycling plastic reduces the amount of petroleum used to make more plastic. It is, in every respect, a win-win situation.

This book will not focus heavily on this topic because it is so well covered elsewhere, and a common practice that nearly everyone does to some extent. Keep up the good work, and try to find newer and better ways to make it a part of your life.



## **Tip 7: Take Advantage of Free and Cheap Stuff**

In communities across the world, particularly in Cascadia, there is a wealth of free items, free activities, and free information all waiting for you.

One source to find more information is to do an Internet search for “free things to do” in your town. Chances are there are several.

To find free or reduced-cost services, check out directories aimed at the homeless such as those put out by Street Roots in Portland. Chances are, if you have a home but make less than \$800 a month, there will be some services there that you can use.

Many places that sell food have discounted items you can buy. For example, the world famous VooDoo Doughnuts in Portland has \$5 buckets of unsold doughnuts. And by “bucket,” I mean a big, deep drywall bucket full of huge doughnuts. Ask around your community to see if any bakeries or restaurants offer slightly stale or unsold items at a low price.

Then, of course, in many neighborhoods in Cascadia you will find items by the curbside with a big, unambiguous sign that says “FREE” by them. Sometimes the items are good, sometimes not; check around your neighborhood and see what your neighbors are giving away some time. Saturday and Sunday afternoons are usually the best times to check because this is when the yard sales wind down, and anything not sold at this point is likely to be given away. Just be sure to get what you want before the rain does, particle board and upholstery foam do not like rain!

Check the Internet for free or cheap things, particularly online classified ads such as on Craigslist. Just remember to use caution when dealing via the Internet because that one too-good-to-be-true ad might be true, or it might be a scam to get your money or worse.

Finally, network. Ask around. Meet other Cascadians in your area. Many of them are going to be your best source for finding free or cheap items or services.

Of course, some free items are not going to be on any “official” list, which leads me to my next point:

## Tip 8: Dumpster Dive

If you're up to it, and if you can do it without getting yourself in trouble or in danger, check out the contents of some of the urban dumpsters near you.

Clothes, food, electronics, furniture, books, appliances, toys, and cookware- they can all be found in your average city's dumpsters, and are waiting to be discovered.

Of course, the usual cautions apply. Never eat something that's obviously rotten, always wash anything you find in a dumpster before using it, go with a friend who can act as a spotter in case of danger (or police), never go on garbage day, and be sure to wear heavy gloves and boots in case needles or other sharp objects are present.

Try thrift stores, retailers, restaurants, hotels, and apartment buildings first. Avoid big-box retailers as these often have both higher security on their dumpsters (because we all know what a *travesty* it is to take a corporation's garbage), and will often destroy discarded items to render them unusable. Wal-Mart, for instance, was recently discovered to be cutting discarded clothing into useless rags before throwing it away.

Go instead for smaller retailers and multi-story apartment buildings, preferably deep within the city where you're less likely to be spotted in the alleyways behind buildings and the pickings are likely to be better. You can *try* dumpster diving in suburban areas, but it's generally not recommended.

Take those items you want, then if you really want to spread a subversive spirit of community, take some really nice items you don't need and give them to someone who wants them. Dumpster diving is the nearest opportunity we have in this current, wheezing post-industrial capitalist society to engage in meaningful redistribution of poorly-managed goods. Be a good steward for these items and find them a home.

If enough people do this, two things will happen: first, dumpster diving will become a crime, in places where it has not already been outlawed, which will turn it into a major underground activity. Second, in light of a failed prohibition, dumpster divers will force retailers and manufacturers to rethink the way they deal with surpluses.

It is an activity that has as much potential for short-term good as it does for long-term subversion, and it's rapidly gaining in popularity as those on the worst end of the economic downturn have had to look for other ways to get the things we want or need.

## **Tip 9: Use Less Public Assistance**

If you are in a position where you can survive without it, I strongly encourage my readers to get off of public assistance, particularly programs such as SSI, TANF, and SNAP.

In some cases, you may need to take advantage of them; that is understandable. But always begin these programs with an eye toward getting off of them as soon as possible.

There are several reasons for this. First, understand that this is one of the ways the Federal Government keeps its claws in Cascadia (and in every community). People who don't actually need assistance but accept it anyway have basically signed a pact of dependence with a government that cares more about the status quo than on getting you back to work.

Second, those programs may not be there in a few years. Social programs are always on the US budget chopping block, and if you rely on them too heavily you may be left high and dry by candidates looking for populist votes for their “tough love” approach to the budget (even as they spend ten times as much money on a new war somewhere in the Middle East).

I encourage all Cascadians, if possible, to either find ways to slash their budgets so that public assistance is no longer necessary to them, or to find local, community-based options to help fill any gaps.

Whatever you do, never let anyone make you feel ashamed for using public assistance, and never vent your hate against others who do the same.

These are hard times, people have forgotten how to support each other as a community, have turned on each other due to the flames of class warfare and disdain for the poor being fanned relentlessly, and the illusion of scarcity continues to burn its ugly imprint into society.

Hating someone for being on welfare only helps further the social and political divisions that perpetuate the root problem in the first place. Pointing at someone and yelling “parasite!” will not solve anyone's problems, no matter how many pundits think it will.

Respect your fellow Cascadians. Don't use public assistance if you don't need it, and don't unfairly judge those who do. Help them, or keep your peace.

There is one important thing you can do which can help reduce your cost of living and reduce the need for public assistance, which brings me to my next tip:

## **Tip 10: Learn to Live Together (Literally)**

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, following the economic boom brought on by the end of the second world war, a new dream swept across the United States: to become a nation of individual wealth, where owning a single-family home where only the nuclear family would live became the norm.

That had a pretty good run, didn't it? But now, sadly, that day is drawing to a close.

Single family homes are becoming less of a viable option to strive for and more of an unnecessary burden that families can no longer take on.

Those of us under 30 know well how difficult it is. In fact you'll find a larger number of our generation living with family, friends, or even people who had previously been perfect strangers out of necessity.

Other families are finding that it's cheaper to let their adult children, grandchildren, and aging relatives move in with them than to have them in five or six different places.

This is the new reality, and will be for some time to come. In order to ease the pain of mortgage or rent payments, utility payments, division of household labor, and food purchases, households have had to get bigger and more eclectic.

We are, in many ways, returning to a way of life that our great-grandparents and the generations before them knew well. People in the old days lived in homes with their extended family, or with large numbers of unrelated people in communal housing. It was only the surpluses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that made the dream of the single, nuclear family home a reality, and those surpluses have become more and more difficult to get a piece of even as the CEOs and politicians find ways to take a bigger cut for themselves.

First of all, get over the stigma of living with family if you're over 30.

Parents, try to realize that your adult children have inherited a badly damaged version of the world you went into; they haven't lost something of their character or become freeloaders, they really are having a hard time.

And to the grown children of these parents, try to understand that your parents may take a while to warm up to the idea. Do your part to make them comfortable. Try to earn a living and do your part, and make life easier for everyone in the house.

If you're not living with family, be careful in selecting your roommates. Select people who are trustworthy, honest, and most importantly of all easy to get along with. This last point is very important. I have seen friends go through so much needless misery, because their roommates couldn't handle the fact that they were a different religion, a different sexual orientation, or used mind-expanding substances. Don't hold back on the tough questions. Tell them who you are and ask them, "are you okay with this?"

Once you have roommates, it will be easier to lessen another burden of modern life:

## **Tip 11: Drive Less**

Assuming you've already gotten rid of that most miserable of burdens- a new car that you still owe money on- you can lessen the cost of owning and operating a vehicle (as well as environmental impact) by simply not using it as often.

One simple rule of thumb can help save a lot of fuel right away: if you have the time and your destination is less than two miles away, just walk or cycle to work.

In fact, even if everyone in your household shares one single car, I'd recommend that everyone in your household have their own bicycle. Equipped with a large enough basket, carrying rack, and with a large enough back pack for yourself, you would be amazed the amount of groceries you can carry on one.

Cascadia- in particular the Portland area- already has the honor of being among the most bicycle-friendly locales in the world. Take full advantage of that!

Public transport is another option. While it takes longer and may not run directly to your destination, if time and conditions allow it's a good alternative to driving. I have survived in the Portland area for about 9 months now, with no car at all and while not pleasant at times, it has saved me thousands of dollars to either walk or go by TriMet.

If others in the household do need the car at times when you don't, lend them the keys. This is another good reason to have a cheap car that you won't miss if it gets destroyed, though! If the car is part of your livelihood, however, I would not recommend this. Get a \$600 beater off of Craigslist and make it your errand car for everyone to use, and have them chip in for fuel, maintenance, and insurance costs.

Car pooling is another option. If you have to drive somewhere, see if anyone else needs a ride.

Ideally, if you live in a city and don't need to drive to work or classes, your car should stay parked 4 out of 7 days of the week. If you live in the suburbs you can try for 2 or 3 days a week, and if you live in the countryside try to have at least 1 day a week that nobody needs the car. While these ideals may not fit with every situation, they are good goals to strive for.

## **Tip 12: Drive Smarter**

There will be times that you absolutely have to drive, especially if you're traveling between some of the smaller towns in Cascadia, or you live outside of a major metropolitan area. But even while driving, you can do your part to reduce waste.

In fact, you can easily reduce fuel consumption by 20% just by changing your driving habits.

For starters, don't accelerate hard when taking off from a stop. Hard acceleration burns a lot of fuel and is one of the worst habits drivers in North America have. By accelerating gently you can increase your fuel efficiency.

Things like air conditioning do have small effects too. Use your AC sparingly, especially on long trips.

But the tip that will save you the most fuel and money is simply this: try keeping your freeway speed to just 55 miles per hour. Just try it some time.

My Corsica got roughly 31 mpg on the freeway, under normal conditions; once I drove from North Little Rock, AR to Olive Branch, MS and back on less than half a tank of fuel. I calculated a substantial gain in fuel economy (nearly 30%), and figured that I was running just shy of 40 mpg in a “mid-sized” car with a fairly sketchy engine. Imagine what you could do in a car that was well-maintained!

You do, of course, have to think about road conditions. You will have to speed up to pass, you will have drivers who will follow too close because they think it's their job to push people to drive faster, and you will have places that you really do need to move faster or slower than 55. But if you try to rein in your average cruising speed right at that point, it will do wonders for your fuel economy over the course of a few hundred miles.

It should also be mentioned that a car that is driven mostly on the freeway, and mostly under 60 mph, will probably have less wear and tear than a car that is driven on city streets, or regularly goes over 60 mph. The difference in pressure in the engine, the dynamics of the wheels and suspension, the transmission and drivetrain, and generally the whole of the vehicle does better over sustained modest speeds than hard acceleration or sustained high speeds.

On top of making sure your vehicle is in good order, and that you have good tires and the suspension is properly aligned, driving at a more relaxed pace can save you hundreds or even thousands of dollars a year.

## **Tip 13: Ban the Bulb!**

You know those CFL bulbs? The ones Bush pushed so hard, the ones laced with toxic metals like Mercury? Get rid of them!

For those with extremely low income, this option may not be the best because it requires a bit more overhead.

However, if you can spend the money up front, it will save you a large amount of money both on power bills and on the cost of bulb replacements over time. You'll also be sending a clear message that you don't buy that CFL bulbs are the best technology for the job.

The bulbs you want are LED bulbs, readily available online and increasingly common in many retail stores.

LED bulbs last longer (some have up to a 5-year warranty), don't exude as many noxious chemicals when discarded, shine brighter, and use less electricity than either incandescent or CFL bulbs.

They use so much less electricity, in fact, that one estimate suggests that if every household in America replaced just one bulb with its LED equivalent, it would eliminate the need for at least one of the largest power plants in the grid. Now consider how much we could save if everyone in Cascadia replaced at least three bulbs with LEDs. That's one less river that would have to be dammed, one less nuclear plant to melt down in the next big earthquake, one less coal plant spewing sulfur dioxide, one less wind turbine in the flight path of a spotted owl. To me, that's a no-brainer.

Of course, they're also something of an under-appreciated technology. Many of the greenwashers have conveniently ignored them for the last few years. And why not? GE makes more off of CFL bulbs, after all. LED bulbs are often produced by smaller companies that don't have as much money to lobby the EPA and media to promote them (not always; most major manufacturers have them but don't promote them as aggressively, and usually they're not as good as the smaller companies). But LED light bulbs do exist, they're proven technology, and they're superior to anything else commonly found on the market.

There are a few things to consider. First, they do cost more, usually \$25-50 depending on the quality and style.

Second, they generally don't work well with dimmer switches. As dimmer switches are inherently inefficient anyway, I would discourage their use since they do not have a true "off" position and are always sending power to your bulb.

Finally, not all LED bulbs are created equal. As stated above, many major manufacturers have them, but the more "affordable" bulbs are often a good example of getting what you pay for. Go by consumer ratings and reviews if you're unsure which LED bulb is best for you.

## **Tip 14: Grow, Forage, Hunt, and Fish**

While your options to do this are somewhat more limited if you live in the cities or suburbs, those who live in or near the countryside and vast forests, lakes, and rivers of Cascadia have a wealth of resources at their disposal.

For the sake of sustainable living, I'm including them because it's important to know that the land you live on is a rich and nurturing entity, but only if you cherish and take care of that land.

Growing your own food is one option if you have some amount of land, however small. Be sure that the seeds and bulbs you plant are non-GMO plants, and be sure that you minimize the use of noxious fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. You would be amazed at how much food a 10x10 urban garden can yield.

Foraging is another option. Cascadia has many edible plants in abundance, including edible berries such as the Oregon-Grape and the blackberry (both the invasive and native strains). There are also several edible species of mushroom in the region (but be careful, as Cascadia is also home to several highly-toxic mushrooms, and three or four varieties that you shouldn't eat unless you're looking for a long, strange trip). Taking a moment to learn about the edible plants and fungi in your specific area is a good investment in survival skills that can go a long way in an emergency.

Hunting and fishing are also viable, if you can stand the bloody business of getting meat from its source. It's obviously not for everyone, and not something I condone if all you're out for is pure sport. But if you need a ready source of animal protein, there are plenty of game animals and fish such as deer, geese, trout, salmon, and rabbit. In a pinch, squirrel, opossum, raccoon, and even rats, along with any number of other species can also be eaten. Just remember to cook wild game extra well to kill any parasites.

Avoid shellfish for the most part. Shellfish are highly sensitive to shifts in the environment and to parasites in the ocean. Unless you know for sure that the shellfish you're gathering are safe, or you have no other options, don't bother.

Any time you gather food from the land, remember the golden rule of conservation: take only what you need. If you gather excesses, find some way of sharing them, or of storing them for future use. Learning to preserve wild fruits can be a very useful skill when the blackberries and Oregon-Grapes are in season.

Also, never gather so much and so often from the same areas that you deplete them completely. Give the land a chance to recover and move on to other hunting and gathering grounds.

The same goes for growing your food. Rotate your crops, plant things that replenish the soil, and don't strip the soil so badly that you end up with a barren square of land. If you use an artificial terrace or pots in a greenhouse, you can help preserve the integrity of the soil.



## **Tip 15: Barter!**

Up until the Industrial Revolution, bartering was one of the primary forms of trade. Currency existed as an “IOU” for when you had nothing else to barter, so that nobody walked away empty-handed.

One of the worst legacies of the Industrial Revolution is the idea that money is the primary object of exchange and the primary goal of labor. Money becomes the fetishized surrogate for objects of value, and because currency is centralized, value becomes centralized and controlled.

What local bartering networks do is take fluctuating currency markets out of the picture. Communities decide what an item is worth based on whether or not it is in demand locally. So, for example, if you need three potatoes, you won't have to worry what the demand for potatoes in South Africa or Malaysia is; you have only to worry about what those three potatoes are worth to your neighbor.

Labor can be bartered for, too. If someone needs a place to stay and you need your house painted, have them help you in exchange for room and board. Food, shelter, and clothing in exchange for work is one of the most effective barterers you can offer in light of the current economic catastrophe.

The Internet is a perfectly good place to set up a bartering network. Create a community forum, or use an existing site like Craigslist. Branch out, spread the meme, and get those in your community to grow more comfortable with bartering as a means of exchange.

There's no worry about pricing items or services based on national averages, or based on government-recommended guidelines. If your neighbor needs a shovel very much, and he is an artist who will paint a mural in your home for one, no one has the right to say he's “selling his services below market value.” If that shovel is worth a mural to him, he alone decides the value of his labors.

When communities learn about bartering and establish a network to barter items, they are empowered. They are no longer at the mercy of fickle systems that are decided upon thousands of miles away by people who don't know them; they are able to trade items for items, items for services, and services for services freely and according to their real value and necessity.

When currency becomes irrelevant, the government has that much less control over transactions. It is an economic act of rebellion and a sign to the global economy that we have not forgotten our own communities, families, neighbors, and friends.

Just be aware that if bartering becomes too widespread in Cascadia, it may become a revolutionary act simply to trade a potato for a pound of blackberries. Be prepared to take your exchanges underground if the government decides that taxes on barterers need to be enforced, or bartering is outlawed.

Be prepared to defend the practice in the public sphere too. If prohibition seems to heavy-handed, the media will step in and try to paint it as a fringe practice riddled with rip-offs and scams, and will try to scare people away with sensational stories of people who had to trade trucks for scissors.

The simple act of replacing money with real items is a dangerous idea. Do it!

## **Tip 16: Learn, Think, and Focus**

These are turbulent times and they could get much rougher. If our movement becomes a successful social revolution, there will be times that so many thoughts will swirl about in our minds, and many of us will feel helpless or even begin to second-guess our involvement.

But there are some things you can do to mentally prepare yourself for troubled times.

First, learn as much as you can. Learn skills, learn facts, learn history (that's very important), learn about the adaptations other cultures have successfully employed, learn another language. No piece of knowledge is completely useless; fill your mind with the wonders of the world and one day, you may find you can put them to work.

Second, think. In fact, if you must have your television fix, get rid of your TV and start watching the bounty of free programs online. You'll find that in choosing your own programming, your mind is sharper because you're taking an active role in what you see, hear, and read. Read plenty, and filter what you learn with a good dose of reason and common sense.

Third, focus your mind. Filter out those ideas that demand your submission to the system as it stands now and focus on how you can free yourself from that system.

Some points to consider:

\*Conspiracy theories do nothing but induce paranoia. They are a potent form of propaganda meant to frighten the masses into submission, but serve no real informative purpose. Question every theory, pick apart its sources, and pursue its most outrageous claims. You will often find that there is no substance to them at all.

\*The news media- and televised news in particular- is not your friend. Remember that the media's bias is not liberal or conservative, but toward the status quo. If you are not part of the status quo, do not be surprised if the media paints you negatively. Fight for your reputation if you must, but don't let smears and slander dishearten you.

\*Money is an abstract concept. It only has value because someone says it does. It is not the only means nor the only end of anything, and should never be a primary goal for any endeavor. It is a human invention, and inventions are not meant to rule their inventors. Don't let the pursuit of money or the appeal of the purse rule your mind, and surround yourself with people who understand this concept.

\*All life has value. Every plant and animal has intrinsic worth, and every person is worthy of at least some measure of life and compassion. See yourself and those around you as the ends to all your means, and do your best to work to the mutual benefit and happiness of your entire community. If there is one creed we need to eat, sleep, and breathe, it is this one.

\*Always take the high ground. If possible, solve disputes with diplomacy and understanding. Suing your neighbors, legal bullying, name-calling, backstabbing, and revenge bring nothing good. Those are the ways of the egoist culture all around us we should strive to remove ourselves from. When it comes to civil unrest, do not be the aggressor, but never be bullied into submission either.

## **Tip 17: Contribute to the Next Edition!**

This is only a first edition of “Leaner & Greener.” It will need expanding in the future.

Know of any tips, helpful books, or other resources that can bring new depth to future editions?

If there's something you think should be included, there are several ways you can help:

1. Comment on the online uploads of this work, such as on Archive.org.
2. Contact Justin Herndon via FaceBook or comment on any FB posts mentioning this work.
3. Distribute it yourself, with your original ideas stapled on as an addendum. Better yet, get ideas from several people and turn it into a gazette of Cascadian tips for better living if you want to. Get creative!

***Ukuk Mamook Nesika Tumtum Kloshe.***